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Request for the inclusion of an additional item in the agenda of the seventy-first session

Observer status for the Pacific Islands Development Forum in the General Assembly

Letter dated 31 August 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to request, in accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the agenda of the seventy-first session of the Assembly, of an additional item entitled "Observer status for the Pacific Islands Development Forum in the General Assembly".

In conformity with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, an explanatory memorandum (see annex) is attached to the present letter.

I would be grateful if you could have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Peter **Thomson**
Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations

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Annex

Explanatory memorandum

Observer status for the Pacific Islands Development Forum in the General Assembly

The present submission provides an explanation as to why the Pacific Islands Development Forum should be granted observer status in the General Assembly.

The justifications are as follows:

1. Legally constituted international organization
2. Expanding Pacific membership
3. A forum for Pacific leadership
4. Inclusive multi-stakeholder membership
5. A collective voice for Pacific small islands developing States and territories
6. The regional counterpoint for the permanent missions of Pacific small islands developing States to the United Nations
7. Regional counterpoint for the high-level political forum on sustainable development
8. Convergence of development agenda

1. Legally constituted international organization

The Pacific Islands Development Forum is a legally constituted international organization representing the public sector, the private sector and civil society organizations in Pacific small island developing States and territories. It was formally launched on 4 September 2015, with the signing of its charter by the following countries and organizations:

- Fiji
- Micronesia (Federated States of)
- Kiribati
- Marshall Islands
- Nauru
- Solomon Islands
- Tonga
- Vanuatu
- Pacific Islands Association of Non-governmental Organizations

The charter of the Forum was registered with the United Nations on 6 October 2015, as follows:

- Certificate of registration No. 66150
- 53047 — Multilateral

A host country agreement was concluded between the Forum and Fiji on 20 June 2014. Diplomatic recognition has also been granted to the Forum by the host country under its domestic laws in the following legal notices:

- Diplomatic Privileges (International Organizations) (Amendment) Order 2013 (Legal Notice No. 64 of 2013)
- Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities Act (CAP 8) (*Fiji Government Gazette*, vol. 14; Friday, 25 October 2013 No. 93)

2. Expanding Pacific membership

The majority of Pacific small island developing States are members of the Forum. Eight countries joined on 4 September 2015 when the Forum charter was opened for signature. Two more have since joined. Only three Pacific small island developing States have yet to join. They are Palau, Papua New Guinea and Samoa. One territory and two regional umbrella organizations, one representing all private sector organizations in the Pacific and the other representing civil society organizations in the Pacific, have also joined the Forum. Currently, there are therefore 13 members of the Forum, as follows:

- Fiji
- Micronesia (Federated States of)
- Kiribati
- Marshall Islands
- Nauru
- Solomon Islands
- Timor-Leste
- Tokelau
- Tonga
- Tuvalu
- Vanuatu
- Pacific Islands Association of Non-governmental Organizations
- Pacific Islands Private Sector Organization

3. A forum for Pacific leadership

The Forum is the only leader's organization in the Pacific that can provide strong national ownership and leadership on the global development agenda. The charter of the Forum provides a governance structure that includes Heads of Government and leaders of organizations in its member countries and territories. The charter, however, goes a step further and requires that each of its member countries establish a multi-stakeholder forum called the National Sustainable Development Board to coordinate the implementation of all Forum decisions at the national level and inform Forum leaders of national priorities. These arrangements ensure that the Forum, as an organization, brings to global and regional forums

strong political leadership that will be able to make the political investment needed to ensure the implementation of the global development agenda.

4. Inclusive multi-stakeholder membership

The Forum is the only Pacific organization whose members include not only the public sector or the Governments of Pacific small island developing States and territories but also the private sector and civil society groups in the Pacific. This membership ensures that the Forum brings to global and regional discourse on the global development agenda a comprehensive whole-of-society approach to achieving unity of effort to accelerate the transition to more inclusive, equitable and sustainable development pathways for the Pacific. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals demands stronger, innovative and multi-stakeholder partnerships in order to mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources. Both the United Nations system and national Governments have recognized that achieving the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will require overcoming sectoral and institutional boundaries and embracing a more integrated and coherent approach. The Forum, with its membership open to all public sector, private sector and civil society organizations in Pacific small island developing States and territories, is best positioned to deliver this outcome.

5. A collective voice for Pacific small island developing States and territories

The Forum, with its membership requirement related only to Pacific small island developing States and territories, is able to both effectively craft common negotiating platforms and advance shared interests on issues such as climate change and sustainable development. As they are from the same region, the members have the same problems, the same vulnerabilities. They therefore have a voice that needs to be heard, a view to put forward and a contribution to make to the international community. The Forum was able to do this in the lead-up to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change when, because of its membership, it was able to craft a common position on climate change called the Suva declaration on climate change, which was promoted successfully by Forum members during the Conference of the Parties held in Paris.

6. The regional counterpoint for the permanent missions of Pacific small island developing States and territories to the United Nations

As the only South-South organization for Pacific small island developing States and territories in the Pacific, the Forum is the regional counterpoint for the permanent missions to the United Nations in New York of Pacific small island developing States. No other organizations in the Pacific can play this role as their memberships do not reflect the composition of the permanent missions in New York. The Forum alone is able to bring a regionally informed view on issues before the United Nations for the benefit of the permanent missions of its members in New York.

7. Regional counterpoint for the high-level political forum on sustainable development

With its inclusive processes and focus on sustainable development, the Pacific Islands Development Forum is ideally positioned to be the regional link for the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The national sustainable development boards, with their inclusive and participatory processes, provide the high-level political forum with an effective mechanism that will facilitate the integration of the global commons into national policy objectives for mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals and targets and achieving policy integration and coherence, including consistency with climate and other sectoral priorities; fostering synergies and addressing potential trade-offs; and ensuring a strong, inclusive and transparent national monitoring and review framework.

8. Convergence of development agenda

The mandate of the Pacific Islands Development Forum mirrors the United Nations development agenda, which includes the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, and the Barbados Programme of Action adopted in 1994, further complemented by the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation of 2005, as well as the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, to name a few. The mandate of the Forum as provided in article 4 of its charter is as follows:

> The Pacific Islands Development Forum shall drive, through national, regional and international frameworks, transformative changes by focusing on the sustainable and inclusive development of Pacific islands by:
>
> - Advocating the very real and pressing significance of climate change for the lives and livelihoods of Pacific islands and Pacific islanders
> - Implementing policies for sustainable development and especially poverty eradication that respond to the challenges posed by climate change and globalization
> - Accelerating the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development, namely, environment, social and economic, to harmonize the pursuit of economic growth with the needs of societies and the sustainability of the environment, and
> - Facilitating the use of tools, approaches and innovations, such as Green-Blue Pacific economies, leadership and genuine partnerships to stimulate robust debate while fostering an inclusive change agenda.

In addition, article 5 of the charter provides that the Forum will have the following functions:

- Serve as a dynamic regional partnership platform that recognizes, celebrates, promotes and preserves the diversity of Pacific cultures, their history and the challenges they face from climate change, globalization and development.
- Provide an inclusive regional multi-stakeholder forum to enable collaboration between leaders and representatives of Pacific Governments,

civil society and the private sector to take ownership of their decisions and actions to address their special development needs.

- Provide an inclusive regional multi-stakeholder forum for leaders of the public sector, civil society and the private sector.
- Serve as the Pacific regional counterpart for the South-South groupings and other regional and international arrangements that focus on sustainable development and especially poverty eradication in Pacific islands to ensure policy coherence at all levels.
- Advocate for a robust, effective, inclusive and transparent follow-up and review process to connect activity at the national, regional and international levels.
- Secure the support of development partners through formal agreements for technical assistance and financial resources to achieve sustainable development and poverty eradication outcomes.
- Promote innovation through the adoption of robust policy designs, good governance practices, and scalable and adaptable technology choices to deliver transformational changes.
- Support the development of national infrastructure of development to connect with regional and international institutions.
- Develop an information hub for the dissemination of information on Green-Blue growth, sustainable development and especially poverty eradication.

As can be seen, the above-mentioned Forum mandate mirrors the United Nations global development agenda and positions the Forum as the best partner to assist the United Nations in fulfilling its agenda in the Pacific.

Conclusion

The Pacific Islands Development Forum should therefore be granted observer status in the General Assembly because of the justifications set out above.